

Guide to the Mobile Housing Board Records

Descriptive Summary:

Creator: Various

Title: Mobile Housing Board Records

Dates: 1950- 1980

Quantity: 305.0 linear feet

Abstract: Appraisal reports with photos, project planning books, maps of project areas, correspondence between officials, various HUD publications, administrative files.

Accession: 98- 09- 344 ; 344- 1997

Organizational History:

The Housing Act of 1949 authorized the federal government to provide financial assistance to cities that undertook urban redevelopment. In the Housing Act of 1954 the term urban redevelopment was changed to urban renewal. Even before then, though, the concept of urban renewal and redevelopment had begun to take shape in Mobile. A 1945 housing market analysis sponsored by the City Planning Commission stated that "The condition of a good portion of Mobile's housing is so far below any reasonable minimum standard that actions toward remedying the situation at least in part are warranted immediately. In 1949 the city began forming its Master Plan for Urban Redevelopment which would change over time. The responsibility for carrying out this plan for urban renewal in Mobile was given to the housing board. Over the next three decades the Mobile Housing Board would undertake numerous projects in accordance with the Mobile Master Plan. These projects were designed, in theory, to remove or rehabilitate blighted, substandard structures and replace them with newly constructed or renovated structures built to meet modern standards. It was thought that through these efforts property values would be stabilized and further deterioration would be prevented, thus eliminating slums. The major projects were the Broad Street -- Beauregard Street Connector, Water Street, East Church Street, and the Central Texas Street area. There were also a number of smaller ones.

Through the course of these projects property was appraised and acquired. Homes were purchased from their owner(s), and along with tenants of acquired property these individuals and families were forced to relocate elsewhere. These individuals and families were eligible for the relocation program administered by the relocation department of the housing board. If a family or individual qualified, low -income public housing was an option if a unit was available. Some displaced residents were eligible to receive a relocation adjustment payment and the moving expenses of most families were paid. Displaced businesses were also eligible for relocation assistance. In addition to finding adequate housing and disbursing payments, the relocation department provided a social worker to assist with the social problems encountered by the occupants during the relocation process. All of these actions generated files on each parcel of land and individual forced from his or her home. It is these files concerning these actions -- appraisal, acquisition and relocation -- that constitute the bulk of the Project Area Series (Series I).

Because local urban renewal projects were funded primarily by the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency (FHFA) and later the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD),

spread of blight and the poverty associated with it. With the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, community action programs were developed in cities across the country. The Mobile Area Committee for Training and Development (MACTAD) was approved by the Mobile Community Action Committee as a delegate agency. It sponsored programs to assist a number of unemployed youths and adults from impoverished areas of the city. These impoverished areas were also undergoing urban renewal. MACTAD provided programs for the "selection, counseling, testing, evaluation, training, placement and follow-up" for individuals in these areas. Series VI contains files, manuals, and reports concerning these programs and the individuals involved.

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 created the community development block grant program which increased the government's commitment to the revitalization of the community. "Community development" replaced the term "urban renewal" and rehabilitation and conservation took top priority in government housing programs. Files and reports concerning community development in Mobile during the mid 70s and through the 80s are found in Series VII.

Several unoccupied structures were bought by the housing board and later sold. While the housing board owned them they were referred to as "inactive structures." They were scattered throughout the city in several different projects. The files on these structures make up Series VIII.

There were a number of smaller projects undertaken by the housing board. These were mostly located in the downtown area but a couple were in the western part of the city. Public housing projects were also undertaken as demand for low-income housing increased. Files concerning these smaller urban renewal and housing projects are located in Series IX. It is important to remember that at the same time, the 50s, 60s and 70s, other cities were also undertaking urban renewal -- Richmond, Va., Memphis, Tenn., and Philadelphia, Pa., to name a few. But Mobile was one of the first cities to put a comprehensive plan together for rehabilitation and redevelopment. Materials concerning urban renewal in other cities are found in the reference series (Series X). Also in this series are handbooks and manuals explaining the national and local urban renewal program. These were scattered throughout the r

Scope and Contents:

The collection contains appraisal reports with photos of acquired properties, project planning

Preferred Citation:

Relocation Files -- Arranged by parcel number with the owner's name on the file label, these files give information on replacement housing. They provide the new address of the relocated person, new rent, and expenses in the move. Also provided is information on each individual such as the amount and source of income which was used to determine whether an individual or family was eligible for public housing. These files contain information which is subject to privacy restrictions.

Business Relocation Files -- Arranged alphabetically by company name, these files provide information on the company relocated -- their new address, photos of business before the move, a general description and inventory of the building and also claims for relocation payment.

Miscellaneous Office Files -- These files give numerical summaries of activities regarding relocation assistance, property acquisitions and citizen participation. There is also correspondence between FHFA/HUD officials and Mobile Housing Board officials as well as inter-office memos, financial statements, and paperwork related to general office operations.

Urban Renewal Files -- These files contain miscellaneous items on urban renewal. Some contain actual plans for a project, others have workable program submissions. Other files contain correspondence between HUD and Mobile Housing Board officials.

Completed Contracts -- These files are arranged by parcel number and contain contracts between the housing board and individuals who agreed to rehabilitate their sub-standard homes to meet local codes in order to be considered a standard dwelling.

Loan and Grant Applications -- These are copies of applications that were sent to HUD to apply for federal funds. They are in binders and contain detailed information about each urban renewal project area. (The applications for individual project areas are grouped together in boxes near the end of the project area series.)

PROJECT AREA: BROAD ST. - BEAUREGARD ST. CONNECTOR (13 cu.ft.+ mixed boxes*)

This project area, Mobile's first urban renewal project, consists of acquisition files, appraisal reports, and urban renewal files. Planning for the Broad St. -- Beauregard St. Connector

actually began in the early 50s but the project did not get underway until 1956. It had two

PROJECT AREA: CHURCH STREET-TEXAS STREET (5 cu.ft.)

For a short period of time, 1960 to 1962, urban renewal was carried out by the Mobile Urban Renewal Agency. During this time the Church Street - Texas Street plan, R -27, was drawn up. In 1962 urban renewal in Mobile was placed back under the authority of the housing board. Boxes 119 - 123 concern this project which became two separate projects under the housing board. These boxes contain mostly miscellaneous files and reports concerning the project area.

SERIES II: ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE FILES (20 cu.ft.)

This series contains files regarding the progress of urban renewal in Mobile which also detail the objectives and problems encountered. Some files contain blueprints and maps of community development plans and there is correspondence, mostly regarding the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). Other reports in these files give numerical summaries of activities regarding relocation assistance, property acquisitions and

Mobile. There are relocation pamphlets and brochures from HUD as well as relocation data for urban renewal projects in Mobile.

SERIES V: JIMMIE DALLAS / URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACTION GRANT (UDAG) (2 cu.ft.)

This series concerns the financing and building in the early 80s of the Medical Community Clinic in the early 80s. It was to be located in the Davis Avenue redevelopment area. This was the first minority owned nursing home in Mobile. It was financed by an Urban Development Action Grant and operated by C.H.C., Inc. Jimmie Dallas, an African American, owned the company.

SERIES VI: MOBILE COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE / MOBILE AREA COMMITTEE FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (17 cu.ft.)

These boxes contain files on persons enrolled in community action re-education and re-training programs. The files are arranged alphabetically by student's name and contain report card-like sheets documenting the student's progress. A few of the boxes have manuals concerning re-training and re-education as well as miscellaneous correspondence. This series also contains files on businesses hiring those who completed the programs. These files contain information which is subject to privacy restrictions.

SERIES VII: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (12 cu.ft.)

SERIES IX: MISCELLANEOUS SMALLER PROJECTS (2 cu.ft.+ mixed boxes)